



Doing Business In JAMAICA: A Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies

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Business Customs

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Jamaica is a former British colony and visitors will note similarities between what happens in Jamaica and the U.K. in terms of practices, traditions and customs. At the same time, business practices from North America have been growing in influence. In Kingston, depending on the type of business, a business suit or blazer is normal – especially for a first meeting. Dress tends to be less formal in resort areas such as Montego Bay and Ocho Rios but even in these areas overly casual attire might not create a good impression.

Travel Advisory

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http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1147.html

Visa Requirements

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U.S. citizens can enter the country with either a passport or proof of citizenship (a certified true copy or original birth certificate) and a photo I.D. (e.g., valid driver's license). No visa is required. Effective 2005, foreign nationals who are conducting business on short-term basis will not require a business visa once they will be in Jamaica for a period not exceeding thirty days. However, foreign nationals will need a business visa to enter Jamaica if they are conducting business for periods exceeding thirty days. Foreign nationals who need visas for entry to Jamaica will require a business visa to conduct business. Affidavits will not be accepted by the immigration office.

U.S. Companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should allow sufficient time for visa issuance if required. Visa applicants should go to the following links.

State Department Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/index.html>

United States Visas.gov: <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/>

Telecommunications

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Jamaica has a modern and fully liberalized telecommunications system, which has seen phenomenal expansion since 2001. Former monopoly full-service provider, Cable and Wireless Jamaica Ltd (CWJ) now faces competition from Digicel (offers GSM mobile service) and Oceanic Digital (CDMA mobile service). Oceanic Digital was recently bought by America Movil. ATT Wireless purchased a third mobile license, but failed to meet the terms of the license and it will therefore be sold to another bidder. There are several Internet service providers – the main ones being new player FLOW, C&W and Infochannel. All three provide high speed ADSL service. In January 2005, licenses were granted to allow the provision of two additional submarine fiber-optic cable connections for international communications. To date only FLOW has rolled out its service.

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Jamaica has two international airports – Norman Manley in Kingston and Sangster in Montego Bay. Most business people traveling between Kingston and the United States choose either American Airlines or Air Jamaica. However there are several other options such as U.S. Air and Spirit, which have daily flights to Kingston and Montego Bay. Other airlines serving Montego Bay include Delta, Northwest and Continental. The airport in Montego Bay is the larger and has been upgraded to international standards. This airport also has more flights and airline options. A relatively new company, International Air Link (www.intlairlink.com) now offers small plane service to Kingston, Montego Bay, Ocho Rios and Negril. Ground transportation is available through taxis, car rental and public transportation, but allowance should be made for possible delay arising from traffic congestion in capital city Kingston. However, while public transportation is much improved, it is still not recommended for business purposes.

Language

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The language spoken is English. (There is also a Jamaican dialect known as patois.)

Health

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Jamaica has a number of public and private hospitals. Most public hospitals have deteriorated over time due to lack of capital expenditure. At least one major hospital operates a private wing, which provides world-class health care. While there is significant room for improvement in sanitation standards, the existing state of the health sector compares favorably with other developing countries. The Embassy is not aware of any potential health risks of which businesspersons should be notified.

Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays

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The normal working day for government offices and factories is 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Fridays. Government offices are generally closed on Saturday and Sunday. Almost all commercial businesses are open on Saturday, but only few open on Sunday. Jamaica is on Eastern Standard Time (EST) year round and does not observe daylight savings time.

Holidays observed in Jamaica are the following:

New Year's Day.....	January 1
Ash Wednesday	Variable
Good Friday	Variable
Easter Monday	Variable
National Labor Day	May 23
Emancipation Day	August 1
Independence Day	August 6
National Heroes Day	October (Variable)
Christmas Day.....	December 25
Boxing Day.....	December 26

Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings

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Those who wish to bring in items temporarily such as software, exhibit material, etc., are required to identify the items at Customs, pay the required duty and General Consumption Tax (as security) and collect a refundable revenue deposit receipt. On exit from the country, the Customs authority refunds the entire amount paid as security. In the case of importing machinery for just three to six months, the above procedure applies in addition to completed Customs Form C25. Laptop computers can be brought in duty free.

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<http://usembassy.state.gov/kingston/>

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